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ABSTRACT

The booklet is based on information from a 1984 conference on school-age latchkey children (those who take care of themselves during the out-of-school hours). An introduction notes controversies in terminology and focuses the discussion on what self-care means to the experiences of childhood. The first two chapters discuss the impact that having parents in the workforce has on children, summarize the number of children in self-care, and discuss risks and benefits. The next two chapters look at help available to parents considering self-care. Formal, adult-supervised programs are described along with other types of help. The final chapter discusses what citizens and community leaders can do at local, state, and national levels. (CL)

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When School's Out and Nobody's Home

Peter Coolsen, Michelle Seligson, and James Garbarino

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Photographs by Peter Coolsen

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Foreword

In an increasing number of households across the United States, young children are at home alone before and after school, on school holidays, and during school vacations. Their parents work to support the family and often have few alternatives to leaving their children alone and don't know how to create one.

These children at home – or on the street – are often reported to be fearful, lonely, and immobile before a television set; but they may be confident, happily independent, and engaged in rewarding activity. Aside from their mental states, though, children alone are more vulnerable to physical danger: accidents, sexual abuse, and experimentation with alcohol, tobacco, and drugs can all occur more easily when an adult is not present. To protect their children, parents often do not permit them to invite other children into their homes when parents are absent. Neither can they provide transportation or accompany their children to a Scout or recreation group or special lessons. Children home alone, therefore, even if safe and unafraid, may be missing many opportunities to develop interests, talents, and personal skills that would enrich, perhaps even shape, their futures.

How can children in self-care take part in joyful, rewarding, and educational experiences that will enhance their development and relieve their parents' worries? This booklet brings together the ideas and experiences of people and communities that have sought answers to this question. It describes programs, strategies, and policies that can be adopted toward that important goal: healthy, happy children learning skills that will prepare them to cope in a changing world.

– Barbara D. Finberg
Carnegie Corporation of New York

Acknowledgments

This publication is based on information generated by participants at the first national conference on latchkey children, entitled "When School's Out and Nobody's Home." The conference was convened by the National Committee for Prevention of Child Abuse (NCPCA); the School-Age Child Care Project of Wellesley College Center for Research on Women in Wellesley, Massachusetts; and Wheelock College in Boston, Massachusetts. The conference was held in May 1984 at the Colonnade Hotel in Boston. NCPCA recognizes and appreciates the contributions made by the conference participants to the development of the ideas that follow. (For a list of conference presenters, see Appendix A, pages 38-42.)

NCPCA and the School-Age Child Care Project have collaborated on this publication out of a mutual commitment to parents and children. In view of the increasing numbers of parents in the workforce, we recognize that quality care for school-age children is one of the greatest challenges facing today's parents. We believe that child care is a critical resource for working families, and one that can assist greatly in reducing the stress level of parents and children. This, in turn, can serve as a buffer against later parenting problems such as child abuse and neglect.

In addition to the conference participants, NCPCA also extends thanks to the authors: Peter Coolsen, Michelle Seligson, and James Garbarino; and to the editor, Scott Perry. Thanks are also due the members of the Editorial Committee who critically reviewed this work: Joan Bergstrom, chairwoman, Department of Professional Studies in Early Childhood, Wheelock College; Sonia Cairns, manager, Urban and Family Programs, Honeywell, Inc., Minneapolis; James D. Cockman, president and chief executive officer, Superior Coffee Company, Bensenville, Illinois; SuEllen Fried, founder of the Kansas Chapter of NCPCA; and David B. Friedman, emeritus professor of Pediatrics, University of Southern California.

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Introduction

The media have discovered that millions of school-age children in the United States take care of themselves every day during the out-of-school hours. These children, from the observation that many of them wear their house keys on a string around their necks, have come to be called *latchkey children*.

Radio, television, newspapers, and magazines nationwide have documented the story of latchkey children. Community leaders have formed local task forces to investigate the subject while local school districts, youth-serving agencies, churches, and PTAs have expressed their concern. In California, the Senate Office of Research completed a study and produced a report, "Who's Watching Our Children: The Latchkey Child Phenomenon."[1] The U.S. House Select Committee on Children held its own inquiry into the subject during its 1984 sessions.

This "news and notice" comes as no news at all to millions of urban, suburban, and rural parents. Given the complexities of modern work and family lives, they have already been struggling for some time with the issues of how to arrange adequate care for their school-age children. For some, part of the struggle has been with shame and guilt, a sense that they are inadequate parents because they are requiring their children to care for themselves.

These parents and other observers react negatively to the *latchkey child* terminology because they feel that using it may stigmatize children. The term *unsupervised children* has also been used, but seems to have a similar negative connotation. The term *children in self-care* has been proposed as a less emotionally charged label.[2] Although the authors recognize that the word *latchkey* has caught the public eye and may be acceptable as a way to mobilize public response, for the sake of objectivity we choose to use the term *self-care* throughout this work.

The purposes of this publication are to discuss what is known about children in self-care, to explore the alternatives available to parents, and to stimulate positive actions in communities across the United States. We will limit this discussion to school-age children, which is here taken to mean children from six to fifteen years old. Certainly it is true that some children younger than six are involved in self-care, but they are not the focus of this discussion because most people recognize that such young children require direct supervision by adults (or at least mature teenagers). We define children in self-care as those who take care of themselves or younger siblings on a regular basis during the out-of-school hours.

The idea of self-care polarizes people. Some are outraged that millions of school-age children are left to fend for themselves for long periods of time while parents are at work. Others, sympathetic to the stresses of working parents, focus more on the dilemma parents face in finding adequate school-age child care when resources are so scarce. One reason for the strong feelings generated around this issue is that many parents feel forced to accept self-care because of economic reasons or a lack of better choices. Another reason for the heightened emotional response is that children of various ages are often lumped together in the dialog about the pros and cons of self-care, seemingly without taking into account the differing developmental needs and capabilities of children of various ages.

This raises one of the most often-asked questions about self-care: "How old is old enough?" How old ought a child to be before it is safe to leave him or her home alone? Setting the age cutoff is important. It reflects our values as well as our understanding about the developing capacities of children. In most areas of the country, a five-year-old left alone without adult supervision is legally a case of neglect. And yet, according to the U.S. Bureau of Census report (1983), some children five years and younger (less than 1%) are in self-care.

Childhood is a time of rich opportunities.

8

Whatever answer one reaches, we would suggest that the question frames the issue much too narrowly. The issue is not only how much or how little children are harmed when they are left alone, but also, and more largely: What does self-care mean to the experience of childhood?

This broader issue concerns the rich opportunities of childhood and how the self-care experience enhances or detracts from these opportunities. As Joan Lipsitz, director of the Center for Early Adolescence, states: "The so-called latchkey issue is narrow. It focuses our attention on risk and harm to young people and their communities. 'Is harm being done?' is and must remain the most urgent question. It obscures, however, its important converse: 'Are opportunities being lost?' "[3]

The greater challenge, then, is to understand the needs of our school-age youngsters and, in the context of the real demands of modern-day working parents, develop the best possible environment in which their children can experience a rich and rewarding childhood. Joan Bergstrom, Wheelock College's chairwoman in the Department of Professional Studies in Early Childhood, emphasizes this in her discussion about the precious opportunities for children in middle childhood: "These years (age six to twelve) are rich with possibilities. They are the time when the critical foundation is laid for adolescence and beyond. During these years children learn to interpret the world. When the children reach the age of six they are receptive; their eagerness and ability to learn are at a high level. But the clock is ticking. As children leave this stage, their thoughts turn inward toward their own identities, and their receptivity to new experiences is diminished. These six years, then, are to be treasured."[4]

Since many parents begin to consider the option of self-care sometime during these years, it is critical that we understand how the experience affects these childhood opportunities. The first two chapters of this booklet discuss the impact on school-age children of having parents in the workforce, and summarize what we know from research about children in self-care. The next two chapters look at help available to parents considering self-care or with children already in self-care. Some of that help is formal, adult-supervised programs for school-age children; other helps are available, and in the chapter called "Self-Care *Plus*" we discuss those. The final chapter discusses what citizens and community leaders can do at local, state, and national levels. The "Selected Resources" list in Appendix B will prove helpful to those readers who would like to develop local programs.

Parents in the Workforce

SALLY FORTH
BY GREG HOWARD
IN SCHOOL WE'RE TALKING ABOUT WORKING MOTHERS AND I'M SUPPOSED TO ASK YOU THIS QUESTION.
"DID YOU JOIN THE RANKS OF PAID WORKERS BECAUSE OF A BELIEF THAT THE POSITIVE PSYCHOLOGICAL BENEFITS DERIVED FROM FAMILY MEMBERS OUTWEIGHED THE LESS DESIRABLE ASPECTS SUCH AS DEPLETED SUPPLIES OF ENERGY AND TIME?"
CAN'T I JUST SAY I ENJOY WORKING?
THINGS AREN'T THAT SIMPLE THESE DAYS, MOM.

SALLY FORTH by Greg Howard
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News America Syndicate.

The remarkable increase in the number of women and, consequently, parents in the United States' workforce has been well documented. Indeed, a revolution of sorts has been underway since the end of World War II. In 1947 less than one in five mothers of minor children (18%) were working outside the home. By 1980 nearly three out of every five mothers with children under eighteen years of age (57%) were employed. The figures are even more dramatic for mothers of preschoolers since they account for the fastest growing segment of this country's workforce.[5]

As a result of these changes, more than thirty million children, including half of all preschoolers, have mothers who work outside the home.[6] Whereas children with working mothers were the exception thirty years ago, today the majority of children in the United States are growing up in families where either both parents or the sole parent is employed outside the home.

This increase in the participation of parents in the workforce has had a profound impact on family life. For parents, it means a tremendous challenge as they attempt to meet work responsibilities, rear their children, and maintain busy households. For single parents the tasks are even more demanding, as they often have fewer economic resources and carry heavy physical and psychological responsibilities alone. Today more than one of every five children (22%) live in a single parent family.[7]

The working-class, dual wage earner couple who struggle with two incomes just to make ends meet also face a considerable

challenge. It is not uncommon for either the husband or wife to work second or third shift – more than one-third of dual wage earners do so.[8] Many work different shifts in order to ensure that there is one parent at home to care for the children.

When children reach school age, working parents are faced with the task of making adequate out-of-school arrangements for them. This includes care and supervision during the before- and after-school hours, regular school holidays and vacations, and other school closings. The task is no small matter: currently there are thirty million children age five to thirteen years in the United States, and more than eighteen million of them have mothers in the workforce.[9]

What do all these changes mean for school-age youngsters? For many children, it means less opportunity for play and structured recreation. Some observers see a devaluation of childhood when parents become more and more preoccupied with economic concerns and responsibilities. One author suggests that "many parents are acting as if they believe they cannot afford childhood for their children" and refers to the "premature granting of responsibility" to young children in self-care as an example of this.[10] Another author identifies a developmental "hurrying" in which children are pressured into adult roles and deprived of childhood experiences.[11]

What are the solutions to these current concerns? While considerable attention is devoted to answering that question in later chapters – which deal with the mobilization of effort on several levels – change will have to begin with a reaffirmation of the value of children. A good example of this is the Kids Place program, designed at the instigation of Mayor Charles Royer of Seattle, Washington. The city of Seattle, in partnership with Metrocenter YMCA and the Junior League of Seattle, is examining that city's accessibility and quality of life for its children. The project is a series of activities aimed at attracting and keeping families with children in the city. Children and adults will evaluate how Seattle succeeds or fails at supporting children and their families. The program also includes ten "good idea" projects that will be implemented by community volunteers, a communication campaign that will promote the best that Seattle has to offer children and their families, and government incentives and development bonuses to encourage child care centers in new downtown buildings.

It is this perception of children as a source of joy and an essential investment in the nation's social future that will lead to solutions to the problems confronting working parents and their children across the United States.

What We Know about Children in Self-Care

WLS-TV, Chicago, IL

In this chapter we will assemble what we know about children in self-care. With any social concern as immense as this one, researchers are somewhat in the position of the fabled five blind men calling out discoveries to one another about the nature of an elephant. Discovery is cheap; synthesis is dear.

As children grow and develop, their capacity for understanding and coping increases, as does their need for challenge. Any discussion of self-care, therefore, must hold in tension the unchanging nature of basic human needs while addressing developmental issues. Of course all children need to be assured of basic security and safety. Of course all children need to have access to appropriate intellectual stimulation and emotional nurturing. Given these assumptions, however, what are the developmentally appropriate child care needs of three- to five-year-olds in contrast with six- to ten-year-olds? How do the capacities of the six- to ten-year-old group compare with those of eleven- to fifteen-year-olds? To make sense of the national debate about self-care, we must pose our questions and formulate our answers within this developmental framework.

The main concern of this booklet is with school-age children—those from six to fifteen years old. There are several million of these children in self-care, and many people believe such arrangements are appropriate. The likelihood of a child being in self-care increases with age: relatively few six-year-olds are in self-care; most fifteen-year-olds are. For the six- to ten-year-

olds, the driving issues center around ensuring that they are safe and feel safe. The special worry is that they are frightened. For the eleven- to fifteen-year-olds, the main issue is whether or not they are losing out on developmental opportunities.

To restate the issue: For six- to ten-year-olds, the emphasis is on safety; for eleven- to fifteen-year-olds, the issue is whether or not they are becoming all they can be. Of course both issues are important for each age group, but we must keep this developmental orientation in mind as we proceed to consider social and economic influences on families in the United States in the future.

How Many Children Are in Self-Care?

Estimating the number of children in self-care is no easy task. Part of the problem is technical. Whom do we ask? Parents may be reluctant to reveal that they leave their children without adult supervision; children may be unable to report accurately. Great variance frequently exists between large regional or national surveys and local surveys. According to many local surveys, the number of six-year-olds in self-care may be *much* larger than official reports suggest. This is also true for older children. Local school-by-school surveys often turn up much higher figures than are officially recognized.

Another part of the problem is definitional. How long and how often must children be on their own to be included? Duration and frequency are important aspects of definition for research purposes. So is age. Is a thirteen-year-old at home without a parent a child in self-care or simply a teenager home alone? Is a six-year-old at home alone a child in self-care or a neglected child?

For our purposes, we classify only children six and older as in self-care. We follow a protective service orientation that defines children younger than this as neglected children. Of course, in practice some of the six- and seven-year-olds in self-care meet the criteria for being defined as neglected. The task of setting an age cutoff is more difficult still at the upper age limit, and has even greater significance for estimating numbers because the likelihood of self-care increases with age.

In one of the first and only national surveys of children, conducted by the Foundation for Child Development in 1976, about 5% of seven- to eleven-year-olds were acknowledged by their parents to be in self-care regularly.[12] Many contemporary observers believe this figure to be very low. More recent

community studies and studies that include older children report much higher figures.

In a survey of 721 California households, Medrich[13] and his colleagues found that the likelihood of sixth graders being at home without an adult after school ranged from 0% (for families with two parents, neither employed) to 45% (for families with one parent, who was employed). In two-parent families with one parent employed the figure was 10.7%; for such families with both parents employed it was 36.8%. Overall, 19% of the children had no adult home after school. This corresponds to Long and Long's survey of more than 2,000 Maryland families reporting that 21% of all households with children under age fourteen used self-care as the principal alternative to parental care.[14]

A survey of employees at three large companies indicated that 80% of the children in self-care were twelve or older, and only 5% were eight years or younger.[15] Other small-scale surveys confirm this pattern: The likelihood of self-care increases with age.

Overall, Long and Long estimate that some six to seven million children are in self-care (a number they believe to be a conservative underestimate).[16] This works out to about 25% of the children in the six- to fourteen-years age range. This figure is higher than some small surveys report (and lower than others), but even if it is too large, the scope of the problem is clearly significant and shows no signs of spontaneously decreasing. Most studies report that about half of children thirteen and younger whose parents are employed full-time are in self-care. What is more, a Children's Defense Fund study estimated that more than 7% of all school-age children are not attending school on a regular basis—with many of the older ones out of school so that they can care for younger siblings.[17] Many of these children are "invisible" when it comes to the surveys used to count the number of children in self-care, and many of the younger ones certainly meet the criteria for being classified as neglect cases.

Finally we have to draw back from the search for a precise and tidy numerical description of the dimensions of self-care. The best we can do is echo one of the five blind elephant investigators: We can see that the scope of self-care "... is very like a wall." What about the disposition of this elephant? What are the risks and benefits associated with it?

What Are the Risks and Benefits?

The four types of risks associated with self-care are that children will:

- feel badly (e.g., rejected, alienated, afraid)
- be harmed badly (e.g., accidents, sexual victimization)
- develop badly (e.g., academic failure)
- act badly (e.g., delinquency, vandalism)

There is some evidence about all but the last of these, which is reported on the following pages.

The benefits or opportunities associated with self-care center around the value of independence and responsibility in promoting development. There are those who would argue that, particularly for the older child, the responsibility of being on one's own after school is a positive rather than a negative influence, an opportunity rather than a risk. If care of young siblings is added, then the opportunity is still greater. Indeed, Judge Nanette Dembitz took precisely this view in a case where a mother was cited for neglect for leaving her three children (ages thirteen, ten, and eight) unattended for two hours after school: "Possible self-responsibility to this limited extent, in a family where parents show an overall affection and concern, may not only be harmless but beneficial."[18]

Challenge can be growth-inducing. Certainly sociologists' follow-up of youth whose families were hit by the great depression of the 1930s showed that, for some at least, the negative outcomes were balanced by beneficial consequences – particularly when their family was strong and they were teenagers when the challenge arose.[19] This is an important point. It is the *premature* granting of responsibility, particularly when it occurs in a negative emotional climate, that seems to be damaging.

No social event affects all children or youth equally. Nearly all experiences are mediated by the quality and character of the family. Thus it is certain that some kids will thrive on the opportunity of self-care; others will just manage to cope or will be at risk; still others will be harmed.

It is often difficult to separate the specific effects of the self-care situation from the more general condition of the family and the neighborhood in which that family lives. More difficult yet is the task of determining what the child's life would be like if a parent was at home (but was there because he or she was unemployed), or worked at other times (during a night shift while the other parent is at home). The former could mean bad news if it meant the family could no longer make ends meet, not to mention the fact that unemployment causes the incidence of child abuse to increase.[20] The stress associated with the latter arrangement might jeopardize the marital relationship. Neither is desirable from the child's point of view.

The existence of risks and benefits as potentials of the self-care situation is undeniable. The big issue, of course, is how frequently children actually fall prey to the risks and enjoy the benefits. Available research offers some clues but is by no means definitive in this matter. In general, risks are greatest and the opportunities are least for children who fit this profile: They are younger or less mature, are alone for several hours a day on a regular basis in apartment buildings located in urban environments perceived to be dangerous, and they have poor communication with their parents. Conversely, the risks are least and the opportunities greatest for older, more mature children who are without adult supervision for a short period only occasionally in homes located in safe suburbs, small towns, or close-knit neighborhoods, and who have good communication with their parents.

Is self-care safe for children? The answer "it depends" may be exasperating, but that is the answer with which parents, children, citizen groups, policy makers, educators, and other professionals have to contend. The experience of self-care is quite variable, and children themselves in some respects are the best witnesses to its effects.

How do children in self-care feel? How do children feel when they come home from school to an empty house or apartment? Do they feel lonely, deserted, resentful, and angry? Or do they feel proud, trusted, responsible, independent, and grown up? Or doesn't it matter very much one way or the other?

One of the most revealing portraits, albeit unscientific, came about as an accidental outcome of a survey by *Sprint*, a language arts magazine published for fourth- to sixth-grade children by Scholastic, Inc. Readers were invited to respond in writing to this theme: "Think of a situation that is scary to you. How do you handle your fear?" The editors got an overwhelming response – probably more than 7,000 letters all told, and 5,000 of them dealt with the fear of being home alone, mostly after school while parents were working.[21]

There are other studies, carefully constructed, that bear out the findings suggested in the responses to *Sprint*. Long and Long report that many children in self-care fear attack from intruders and from other children, particularly siblings.[22] Zill's national survey of children[23] is consistent with these findings. Some 32% of the males and 41% of the females reported that they worried when they had to stay at home without an adult; 20% of both boys and girls admitted being afraid to go outside to play. Rodman and his colleagues, however, report no significant difference between

children in self-care and children under the care of adults in a study conducted in a medium-sized city.[24] Rodman contends that studies reporting more fear among children in self-care lack appropriate comparison groups and are subject to interviewer bias. Long and Long respond that their studies have probed more deeply, and that they have done a better job of establishing a relationship with children in which they can express their fear. Another explanation for the discrepancies is that the level of fear for children in self-care varies from setting to setting, being greatest for children in urban apartments (the focus of the Longs' research) and least for children whose homes are in safer small towns, rural areas, or close-knit neighborhoods.[25]

Steinberg studied 865 children in grades five, six, eight, and nine in a small midwestern city.[26] He classified their after-school experience on a continuum from "home with parent, other adult, or older sibling" to "unsupervised, hanging out." He found that the less directly supervised the children, the more likely they were to be susceptible to peer pressure (to conform to peer influence rather than make decisions for themselves). What is more, parents who use an "authoritative" approach rather than "authoritarian" or "permissive" ones have children who are less susceptible to peer influence. *Authoritative* here means parents who ask children for their opinions but maintain ultimate control.

Analyses of the calls children in self-care make to telephone support services provide additional clues to the child's experience. In State College, Pennsylvania, "PhoneFriend" provides a case in point.[27] Of the 1,370 calls received during the first year of operation, 60% were classified as "just want to talk" or "bored," while 19% were classified as "lonely" and 15% as "scared," "worried," or "sad or crying." Relatively few dealt with practical emergencies such as cuts and scrapes (4%) or home maintenance problems (3%). (The system allowed multiple classification of each call, which is why those numbers add up to more than 100%.) Who did the calling? Children seven or younger made up 33% of the calls; another 33% were from eight- to nine-year-olds; 17% from ten- to eleven-year-olds; and 17% from children twelve and older. Most (82%) of the PhoneFriend volunteer responses were "affective," i.e., listening and reflecting feelings. Clearly one of the significant issues facing children in self-care is morale and peace of mind.

How safe from harm are children in self-care? In addition to concerns about how children in self-care feel, some observers have raised questions about how safe school-age children are

without adult supervision. One concern is vulnerability to physical and sexual violence. As noted earlier, many children in self-care fear intruders. Physical and sexual assault is a real threat, of course, although not as probable as many children fear, except perhaps in the most violent and dangerous of environments. Much more likely is physical or sexual assault by familiar persons, particularly siblings. Survey research conducted by Straus, Gelles, and Steinmetz found that physical assault by siblings was three times as great as assault by parents – 48% of siblings engaged in "severe violence" versus 14% of parents to children (aged three or older).[28] Finkelhor similarly reports that 39% of the sexual abuse reported by girls and 21% of that reported by boys involved siblings (as opposed to the 4% involving fathers).[29] Abusive treatment at the hands of older siblings (mainly brothers) and their friends is a significant threat to young children in the absence of adult supervision. Long and Long report that fear of such assault is a major problem for children in the "care" of older siblings.[30]

The safety of children in self-care depends in part on their level of knowledge about how to protect themselves. These "survival skills" are the focal point for numerous programs aimed at children in self-care. How teachable are children when it comes to self-care survival skills? One indication comes from research conducted by Russell Jones and his colleagues.[31] Jones assessed the fire safety knowledge and skills of seven- to ten-year-old children. He found that before training, the children had virtually no knowledge of how to respond effectively to a fire emergency. They thought they knew what to do, however, 67% of the time. This "worse than nothing" situation means many children in self-care are quite vulnerable, a fact evident in reports from several cities that children in self-care are at special risk for dying in fires.

A training program of six forty-minute sessions resulted in nearly 100% mastery of fire emergency skills. After eight months, however, the trained youngsters were operating at about the 60% skill level. It is evident from this study that adult intervention can increase the safety of children in self-care, but that such intervention must be an on-going commitment rather than a one-time-only affair.

What are the developmental risks? Several studies have examined the academic and social competence of children in self-care. Woods reported that the low income, urban fifth graders she studied who were in self-care had more academic and social

problems than did other children of working mothers who had adult supervision.[32] A study by Alan Ginsburg and his colleagues also reported lower academic achievement.[33] Studying fifth and seventh graders in a rural small town environment, however, Nancy Galambos found no difference in academic achievement or school adjustment.[34] It appears that whatever the academic and social risks for children in self-care, they have only emerged with any clarity in settings in which other risk factors are present (e.g., low income, a threatening environment). What is more, the findings seem consistent with what has emerged as a general conclusion regarding the impact of maternal employment on child development, namely, that any adverse effects are most likely to be found among young boys.[35]

Do children in self-care act badly? How do unsupervised children act when they come home? What do they do? As yet we do not have answers to these questions.

Manis and his colleagues set forth three useful criteria for assessing the seriousness of social problems:[36]

- primacy, or how much the problem acts as a cause of other problems and is the result of multiple factors;
- magnitude, which refers to its extent or frequency in the population; and
- severity, which concerns the degree or level of harmfulness.

Self-care qualifies as a social problem primarily because of its magnitude, although it does have a measure of primacy, being related to some broad changes in economic life and sex roles.[37] Even Long and Long, who rate self-care higher on the severity dimension than many other observers, estimate that 80% of children in self-care escape significant physical and psychological effects, and only 20% are "casualties."[38] Nonetheless, the large numbers of children involved (numbering in the millions by all estimates) mean that even if harm comes at a very low rate the number of casualties will be significant. For instance, accepting an estimate of five million children in self-care, even if only 1% experience physical harm in fires, accidents, or assaults, the net effect will be at least 50,000 physical casualties. If only 10% experience serious fear, that means there are 500,000 scared kids.

More and better research will certainly further refine understanding of this elephant called self-care, especially if researchers are complemented with those who can derive valid syntheses of their data. But we know enough already to go forward with programs designed to provide adult supervision for children, and it is to those kinds of programs that we invite your attention in the next chapter.

Supervised Alternatives to Self-Care

While debate continues about the numbers of young, school-aged children who are caring for themselves when school is not in session, before- and after-school programs are currently operating and many are developing in communities across the United States. These supervised programs are organized around the principle that school-age children deserve to participate in and be exposed to a wide range of educational and social experiences that help them to develop into happy and secure young people.

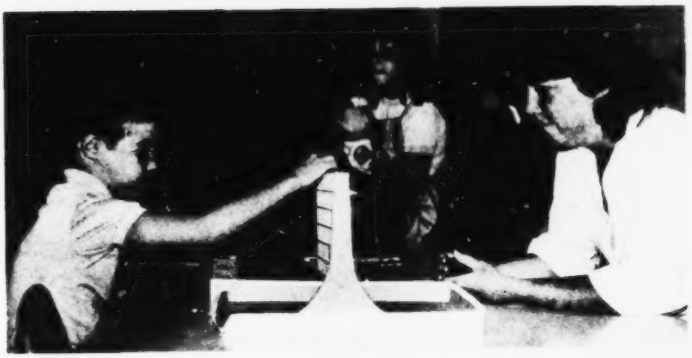
Why Are Programs Important?

Programs for young school-age children offer some obvious concrete assistance to families who turn to their community for help with child care. Programs offer a predictable source of child care that may not be available when parents use informal arrangements – neighbors, friends, relatives, and a patchwork of afternoon activities combined with self-care. Programs offer children an alternative to self-care, which unless carefully constructed, often leaves children in the position of spending many long hours on their own at home. For many children, the adults they see in before- or after-school programs are the only adults, other than their own parents and classroom teachers, with whom they can interact on a regular basis. Grandparents and other family members may not live in the same community; and as families have fewer children, older siblings can no longer be counted on to round out a child's experiences with close relationships other than peers.

Qualities of Good Programs

The best of supervised programs are staffed by adults, offer a carefully designed curriculum based on knowledge about the cognitive, social, and emotional development of children, and use the resources of the community.

Children who come to a before- and after-school program have an opportunity to interact with adults who care about them, and who make it their business to explore those experiences, feelings, and emotions that children bring with them to the program. The



Children and staff member enjoy a game at the Hephzibah Children's Association school-age child care program in Oak Park, Illinois.

need to tell someone else about the events of the school day, for example, is a need common to all children. It provides important communication links between the child and adult caregivers and supplies important information about the child's self-concept and coping strategies.

Some programs seek to establish relationships with older people, who can add a special dimension for children whose own grandparents may be dead or live far away and whose contacts with older people may be limited. A fine example of this intergenerational approach is AgeLink, a project of Western Carolina University's Center for Improving Mountain Living (CIML). AgeLink brings together some of the 11,000 children in western North Carolina who return from each school day to empty homes with some of the area's 80,000 people ages sixty-five and older. These elders are encouraged to share with the children their special skills in crafts, music, and storytelling. Program planners see this as meeting at least two needs: elders pass along to children the special talents and skills that otherwise might be lost to future generations, and children who would otherwise spend many hours on their own can be in the company of caring adults. Among the models CIML recommends are children and elders coming together in a group setting (in a school, community center, senior center, church); individual children matched up with individual older caregivers in homes; older adults offering transportation to after-school activities, and returning children home afterward; and telephone reassurance systems for children caring for themselves at home.

In a good program, the physical environment is important. Children should feel comfortable when they come to the program before and after school. Such a program should look more like home than school, and program planners should take care to make the distinction between the program and regular school when selecting and designing space. A good program also plans and implements a curriculum that acknowledges the differing needs, interests, and skill levels of children of various ages.

Parents who choose to enroll a child in a school-age child care program should be able to expect that the program:

- insures the safety of their child;
- makes every effort to meet their child's individual needs; and
- has hours, a location, and costs that address the parents' needs.

While school-age child care costs less than preschool child care, it still may be beyond the reach of some families. The program initiators, therefore, should make every effort to obtain government or private funding that will help those families who cannot pay the full cost of care, which in 1985 ranged from $12 per week up to $40, depending on the type of program and its access to financial support.

What about Older Children?

While many programs do offer services to children from age five through twelve, designing a program for children in the upper age range is a challenge. Some programs enlist older children as helpers with younger children, or initiate special clubs or activities that only older children may attend. This helps to make the older children feel special, especially at a time in their lives when their physical and social development makes them feel like big kids. While keeping in mind that older children need to experiment with risk-taking, autonomy, and socializing, programs also must provide a warm and nurturing environment for those children as well. It is particularly important for older children to find a listening ear available when it is time to talk or express feelings that may have been stored up all day long in school.

Some communities have paid particular attention to the out-of-school time of young adolescents between the ages of ten and fifteen, designing programs with a special emphasis on the arts, sports, new technologies, and community service work. This age group has always been the focus of attention of organizations such as Boys and Girls Clubs, Girl and Boy Scouts, Campfire, and Y's. As the nature of work and family life has changed, however,

these youth-serving organizations have begun to change the nature of their programming to reflect the increased needs of parents to know that an older child is in a particular place at a particular time. Issues of accountability and safety apply to older children just as they do to younger children, and perhaps just as urgently given that children must deal with increasingly unsafe environments.

Young adolescents can contribute in many ways to the communities of which they are a part, at the same time participating in programs that offer supervision, fun, and learning. Almost any community institution with a mandate to serve children can be tapped as a resource for this age group: schools, libraries, municipal recreation agencies, religious institutions. For example, the Early Adolescent Helper Program based at the City University Graduate School in New York City places early adolescent child care helpers in both preschool and school-age child care centers. When school is over for the day, these young people spend some time working with young children as well as participating in ongoing discussions and training, an integral part of a program that offers both a peer group experience and a work role. The Helper Program has also launched an intergenerational project, bringing young people and older adults together in activities such as taping oral histories and group discussions.

Community service offers challenge and opportunities to try on adult roles in the real world, a chance to find some answers to the all-absorbing question of early adolescence: "Where do I fit in?"

Finding School-Age Child Care Programs

Parents can find programs for their school-age children in a wide variety of locations, under an equally wide range of administrative auspices. Programs are in public and private schools, in Y's and other youth-serving organizations, in day care centers, libraries, municipal recreation centers, and religious institutions. Many young children are cared for before and after school in family day care homes, home-centered child care for small groups of children staffed by a child-care provider, sometimes assisted by another adult. While many organizations such as libraries and recreation centers offer what might be called ad hoc child care, used by some families as a solution for part of the afternoon, parents often seek out a program that offers more comprehensive care including school holidays, when parents must be at work.

The following programs are examples of the different types of administrative arrangements used to provide school-age child

care. These programs represent only three organizational possibilities, and the range of other options is broad.*

In Reston, Virginia, the Reston Children's Center, Inc. offers both preschool and school-age child care services to children in that community. A private, nonprofit agency, the Reston Children's Center combines parent fees with some county subsidies to run the program. The center's unique Satellite Family Day Care program also serves school-age children in family day care homes close to the children's neighborhoods and schools. The satellite program was started when the center's after-school program reached the overflow level. Parents in the Reston program are involved in policy-setting, fund raising, and advising on administrative and curriculum issues.

The Adventure Club in suburban Minneapolis, Minnesota, was originally a venture among parents, the Community Education program of the school system, and the municipal parks and recreation department. While the program is now under the administrative auspices of the Robbinsdale School system, it retains its collaborative nature, using YMCA for programming and special events. School-age child care is available to all children throughout the school district – several hundred children, from kindergarteners to sixth graders. Like many programs across the country, Adventure Club's budget is based on parent fees (90%) with the other 10% coming from various funding sources, including city subsidies that help to support a portion of the child care costs for low-income families.

Chicago's Carole Robertson Center for Learning serves children from Chicago's near west side community. Children from five to fifteen participate in the program, although some children over fifteen continue to take part. The center acts as an important community center for the parents as well, providing advocacy and referral and recreational services. A majority of the center's corporate board (60%) consists of parents. Before- and after-school care is offered on a year-round basis. Funding comes from a variety of sources, including the Illinois Department of Children and Family Services, the United Way, and small corporate and foundation grants. Adults and children also participate in ongoing fund-raising activities.

Schools are a logical community resource to turn to for child care. Schools can administer their own programs or can contract

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* These and other programs are written about in greater depth in *School-Age Child Care: An Action Manual*, available from the School-Age Child Care Project, Wellesley College Center for Research on Women, Wellesley, MA 02181.

with community agencies that take responsibility for designing the program, recruiting children, hiring staff, and managing the day-to-day operation. School systems may prefer to use the expertise in school-age child care that already exists in the community; schools themselves may not want to incorporate necessary funds for this purpose in their own budget. Parents, organized either by school or across a school district, can be partners with the schools, forming nonprofit corporations and putting together the kind of program they want for their children. Social service agencies, community groups, and civic groups are also likely partners with the schools; for example, members of local Leagues of Women Voters or Junior Leagues have taken the lead in organizing and administering programs. Day care centers already serving preschool children may add a school-age child care component, providing care perhaps for their own "graduates" or for siblings, or, as is the case in a number of communities, designing special after-school clubs for children.

The following examples of public-school-based programs show the diversity of ways in which schools can be involved in providing school-age child care.

The Brookline, Massachusetts, public elementary schools offer "extended day" programs to more than 500 elementary school children in eight elementary schools. Another program, the Brookline After School Special, provides special programming for children in grades four through eight. The Brookline Extended Day programs were one of the first models in the United States in which parents administer the programs as separately incorporated organizations within each school, and they have served as a national model for programs of this type. This partnership approach – the schools and parents as partners – allows for each program to develop its own special character while complying with guidelines and procedures developed by the Brookline School Committee and administration. The programs are supported by parent fees and social services funding, and receive in-kind contributions of space and other resources from the public schools.

School-age child care programs in the Arlington, Virginia, public schools are administered by the school system – an approach different from that taken in Brookline. In Arlington, the program began with sixty-six students in three schools in 1979. By 1984 the program served more than 1,150 children in at least twenty-one schools. Parent fees are based on a sliding scale reflecting family income, and the program has an active parent organization that represents parents of children attending programs in every school. The Arlington Extended Day program

began with strong citizen support and maintains that support today.

Another approach to school involvement is that taken by the Dade County public schools in Miami, Florida. Several thousand children participate in after-school programs administered by individual school districts, YMCAs and YWCAs, and community schools. More than 130 schools are now involved in providing after-school care. The programs are self-supporting, with the largest percentage of income from parent fees—approximately $15 a week in 1984. In a few schools, social service funding is available for low-income families. This model combines a centralized administrative function with a decentralized approach to delivery of services, allowing the schools to benefit from existing community expertise in school-age child care.

What Are the Barriers to Program Development?

While much activity is under way in communities across the United States that shows greater attention to the needs of young school-age children for supervised opportunities to play and to develop, barriers to program development still exist. In some cases, concern about liability has prevented schools and other institutions from tackling the school-age child care issue, fearing that in case of accident or injury the institution will be held liable.[19] In some communities, too, there is a premium on school space, and programs must find other locations in the community. Funding remains one of the most critical impediments to developing good programs, since it is increasingly difficult to obtain government funding for low-income parents, and staff salaries remain for the most part too low to retain qualified employees who will stay with a program over time.

Programs for older children are few in number, and it continues to be difficult to convince the general public that children in middle schools and junior high schools have some of the same needs for care and nurturance that younger children have. Yet it is in the after-school programs that children find an environment that actively encourages experimentation, personal development, and social communication. It is usually not possible in a structured classroom setting for children to do what many have called the most important work of children: play. Garbarino has asked:

> What is childhood all about then? The first aspect of childhood is play. The child is given a license to play and in so doing explores the world. This play is distinguished from adult work in that it doesn't have production as its goal, although work can

Play is an important part of childhood.

be an important activity for children.... Children are shielded so that they can play, and this play is quintessentially human, as Jacob Bronowski so correctly recognized when he spoke of the human being's "long childhood" as a key to the ascent of [humankind].[40]

Play and the development of competence in children – another essential element for their development – are not mutually exclusive. Through play, children learn how to get along with each other; they learn how to set goals and accomplish them; and if it can be said that children need to learn how to have fun, then that too is a desirable outcome.

Thus, at a time when most school-age children's parents will be working outside the home, options for safe and challenging play will diminish. Supervised school-age child care programs can meet this need, at the same time helping to alleviate parental concerns about the safety and supervision of their children. Although few studies have been conducted on the relationship between participation in after-school programs and increased academic competence, many anecdotal reports suggest that children who are happy, occupied in activities, and relieved of the burden of caring for themselves on a regular basis seem also to do better in school and have noticeably improved self-esteem.

Supervised alternatives to self-care are not the only options available, and in many cases as noted are unavailable. Other choices available for parents are loosely categorized together in the next chapter, "Self-Care *Plus*."

Self-Care *Plus*

Local communities must develop a variety of alternatives for school-age children because the needs and resources of individual families and neighborhoods vary greatly. For many school-age children, the option of choice is a formal, adult-supervised child care program. There are instances, however, where the age and maturity of the child, the safety of the home and the neighborhood, and the quality of parent-child communication permit an acceptable self-care or sibling-care arrangement. In other instances, parents may recognize that a supervised program would be the best choice, but in the absence of financial resources, or because of the unavailability of local programs, they may select self-care as the only realistic alternative. In these instances there are supportive services* that parents can seek out to assist in developing a safe and healthy self-care situation. These include:

- educational programs for children and parents;
- community help lines;
- check-in and block parent programs;
- sick child programs; and
- employer-based initiatives.

Appendix B, "Selected Resources," lists all the programs mentioned in this chapter.

Educational Programs

It is likely that most school-age children will spend some time unsupervised. These children, especially those who are regularly in self-care, will need clear rules and instructions, information and training for emergencies, and a pre-arranged support network that they can use in times of need. Educational curricula have been developed that provide information, encourage communication, and teach self-care skills. Some have been

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* In part the material in this chapter is derived from original research by Diane Nolan, later published as "Children's Feelings Toward the Latchkey Child Care Arrangement and Alternative Programs: A Review of the Literature," in the *School Social Work Journal*, Illinois Association of School Social Workers, Vol. IX, No. 1, Fall 1984, pp. 30-47.

created specifically for children in self-care, while others are more general, dealing in the enhancement of self-sufficiency and independence in children with special relevance to children in self-care.

While the purposes of the various available curricula are similar, they differ considerably by age group served, degree of involvement of parents, skills that are taught, and the type of community setting in which they are presumed to be conducted. It is important to point out that none of the curricula is meant to stand on its own as a substitute for supervised care. Instead, all are a supplement to overall child care arrangements. There is apparently no comprehensive evaluation of the effectiveness of these curricula, an omission that will become more pressing as their use spreads to more local communities.

Sixteen self-care curricula are described here. The purpose of these listings is to present some of the major curricula that are most in use nationwide and to describe their essential components. No endorsement of any curriculum is intended, either expressly or implicitly, and this summary certainly does not include all available materials.

Alone After School: A Self-Care Guide for Latchkey Children and Their Parents by Helen Swan and Victoria Houston. This family workbook provides parents with tools to judge their children's readiness to be on their own. The purposes of the exercises are to build children's skills in self-care, including health and safety measures, and telephone use. It also prepares children to deal with a wide range of emergencies. The book has experiential exercises parents and children can do together.

BAT (Basic Aid Training). BAT, sponsored by the American Red Cross, presents emergency assistance, first aid, and safety awareness skills to fourth- through sixth-grade children. Although the six-session course is not designed specifically for children in self-care, it does provide basic safety skills that are beneficial to children who are home alone.

HELP (Homemaking Elementary Learning Procedure Project). The HELP program is sponsored by the Rhode Island Department of Education as part of the school curriculum. It has two courses, one serving children in grades three and four and the other serving children in grades five and six. The purposes are to teach life skills that enable children to become self-sufficient, to build self-esteem, and to assist children in becoming useful and effective adults.

How to Raise a Street Smart Child: The Complete Parents' Guide to Safety on the Street and at Home by Grace Hechinger. This guide, written for parents, offers practical advice on how to teach children of all ages to live safely in a frequently unsafe environment. It presents a balanced approach to the issue of safety and the need to teach life skills to children.

I Can Do It. National Campfire, Inc., sponsors *I Can Do It*. It is a self-reliance course for second and third graders. The purpose is to teach children self-help skills, including home safety and family responsibility. It consists of eight one-hour sessions covering such subjects as safety, nutrition, personal hygiene, use of telephone, and enhancement of self-image.

I'm Home: A Guide for Children with Independent Time/Be Home Soon: A Guide for Parents of Children with Independent Time by Nancy McConnell. This is two books in one. The first half is a guide written for children who take care of themselves. It includes such issues as communication with parents, use of the telephone, safety at home, nutrition, doing chores, creative fun, and getting along with siblings. The second half is a guide for parents of children in self-care. It discusses the self-care decision, communication with children, safety issues, structuring time for children, sibling care, and networking.

I'm in Charge. The *I'm in Charge* program is a project of the Kansas Committee for Prevention of Child Abuse. It is a five-session course taught to upper elementary (fourth to sixth grade) children and their parents. The purposes of the course are to assist families in deciding whether self-care is appropriate for their child, and to enhance parent-child communication in developing self-care arrangements. Three of the classes are taught to children alone, one is for parents alone, and the final session is for parents and children together. It comes with a film called *Lord of the Locks* and a *Parent Guide*.

In Charge: A Complete Handbook for Kids with Working Parents by Kathy S. Kyte. This book is written for children. The purpose of the book is to give children in self-care information on what they need to do in order to ensure a successful arrangement with their parents. It discusses what children should expect of themselves when they are home alone, how to cope with a crisis, how to launder, iron, mend clothes, and how they should discuss problems and fears with their parents.

On My Own: The Kids Self-Care Book by Lynette Long. This is an activity book for children. It is intended to assist parents in helping their child become prepared for self-care and to make a decision as to whether or not the child is ready to be left alone.

On My Own. The Michigan Pine and Dune Girl Scout Council sponsors *On My Own*. It is taught to children in grades one to six. The purposes of the course are to help children take care of themselves when they are home alone, to educate children in sibling care, to facilitate values clarification, and to aid personal well-being.

Prepared for Today. The Boy Scouts of America sponsor *Prepared for Today*, a project book for children aged six to eleven. The purpose of the program is to guide parents in helping children cope with situations they may encounter when they are home alone. The child learns six different skills relating to home safety, nutrition, hazards, neighborhood resources, and sibling care.

School's Out – Now What? Choices for Your Child's Time by Joan M. Bergstrom. This is a hands-on guide for those concerned about children in the middle years of childhood when the skills, habits, and interests of a lifetime are formed. It is a resource book for parents, teachers, and people who work with school-age children to assist in handling safety in the home and community; scheduling activities, chores, and homework; balancing TV watching; learning to care for younger brothers and sisters, and pets; and finding help from others.

Survival Guide for Busy Parents: How to Help Your Child Do Well at School While You Do Well at Work by Dorothy Rich. This is a handbook for working, single, and very young parents who are struggling to juggle job, home, school, and children. It provides ideas and strategies for teaching basic school and life skills to children from toddler to teen.

Survival Skills for Kids. The Virginia Cooperative Extension Service sponsors *Survival Skills for Kids* and offers it to children aged eight to thirteen. The purposes of the six-session course are to help children develop coping skills, enhance self-esteem, and build positive feelings toward parents. The program is taught by trained volunteers to small groups of children in a community setting.

The Handbook for Latchkey Children and Their Parents: A Complete Guide for Latchkey Kids and Their Working Parents by Lynette and Thomas Long. This book, written for parents, looks at alternatives to the self-care arrangement and discusses how to make self-care more positive when it is the only care available. It gives precautions and procedures that may be followed to improve home safety and reduce feelings of fear and stress.

The Official Kids' Survival Kit: How to Do Things on Your Own by Elaine Chaback and Pat Fortunato. The objective of this book is to provide a reference source for children. It attempts to help children become more self-sufficient. The topics discussed range from coping with everyday situations (acne, allowance, babysitting, how to make a bed, manners, nutrition, appearance) to the more serious concerns of some children (how to deal with loneliness, boredom, jealousy, and fear).

Community Help Lines

A few communities have developed help lines for children in self-care. The purpose of the help line, also called a hot line or a warm line in some communities, is to provide emotional support and

Volunteer counselor at Kids Line, Elk Grove Village, Illinois

assistance in times of emergencies. Counselors are trained to assist children and provide reassurance. This service can be particularly helpful to parents who are unreachable by telephone

during work hours. Help lines are not intended as substitutes for adult supervision, but rather as a supportive resource when an adult is not available. While help lines do not provide the in-person contact that formal programs do, they do offer a back-up service when an adult is not available. What follows are descriptions of five help lines in use across the United States.

Chatters (Houston, Texas). Chatters, the nation's first help line for children in self-care, helps children cope with difficult situations and offers emotional support to children at home alone. It is located at a day care center near the child's home. Each child is assigned a counselor and meets with the counselor prior to the phone contact. Children make routine calls to the counselor. In the event of an emergency, the counselor is able to go to the child's home. Chatters serves children age eight and up.

PhoneFriend (State College, Pennsylvania). PhoneFriend is sponsored by the American Association of University Women, State College Branch. The purpose of PhoneFriend is to provide a source of contact for children to receive information and support when they are home without adult supervision during after-school hours. In Kansas City, Kansas, for example, the PhoneFriend operation is housed inside a local TV station, which donates the space and provides free publicity.

Call A Friend (Rochester, New York). This is a warm line for children in grades two to six. It is sponsored by the local Camp Fire Council and provides nine hours of training to volunteers who answer the telephones during after-school hours and on weekdays when school is not in session. The volunteers are trained in reflective listening and referral making, and coordinate their program with other community agencies.

CONTACT (Syracuse, New York). CONTACT is a twenty-four-hour telephone warm line for elementary school-age children. Volunteers receive fifty hours of training and provide callers with guidance, support, reassurance, and information when parents or other adults are not available.

Talk Line/Kids Line (Elk Grove Village, Illinois). Talk Line/Kids Line is a twenty-four-hour help line that serves children age thirteen and under from the northwest suburban area of Chicago. The purpose of Talk Line/Kids Line is to create a helping network that will provide direction, guidance, support, and information for children at home without adult supervision.

Check-in and Block Parent Programs

Two alternatives that use adults for caring for school-age children are family day care check-in programs and block parent programs. The advantage of these programs is that they provide some degree of adult supervision without the resource demands of the larger, school-based or other community institution-based programs.

In home-based family day care programs, school-age children can spend some time in the provider's home and some time in their own homes as well as a variety of permissible after-school locations. Parents, providers, and sponsoring agencies mutually agree upon appropriate activities for the children.

An example of the check-in program is the Family Day Care Check-In Project in Fairfax, Virginia. The program serves children between the ages of eleven to thirteen at a nominal fee of $1 per hour. The program is designed to provide flexible care and supervision for older elementary and junior high school children, who are assigned to a trained, neighborhood-based family day care provider. Under a special contract, parents designate exactly how much freedom and responsibility they want their children to have. Thirteen-year-olds may be allowed to go home alone after school and check in with the providers, who then verify the youngster's location by calling him or her.

Another alternative including a component of adult supervision is the block parent program. Block parent programs use trained neighborhood volunteers who make themselves and their homes available to children who need a place to go during a time of emergency. An example of this kind of program is the Unified Block Parent Program in Detroit, Michigan, sponsored by the Michigan State PTA. An official window sign is used by all program participants to designate the existence of a safe home. The cooperation of the entire community is elicited, including police, private citizens, places of worship, and businesses. Other similar programs include the Emergency Block Parent Program in Phoenix, Arizona, and the Block Mother Program in Shawnee Mission, Kansas.

Family day care check-in programs and block parent programs are promising alternatives to self-care. By their nature, family day care check-in programs are more complex and require coordination between parent and community resources. Block parent programs can be a valuable back-up resource for many children in self-care. They do, however, require neighborhoods where adults are both at home during the day and willing to provide their assistance to children during emergencies.

Child Care for Sick Children

Even if parents are fortunate enough to arrange adequate before- and after-school care for their youngsters, they are still faced with the problem of what to do when their child gets sick. Parents must balance the demands of the job with the reality that sick children need special, adult-supervised care. There are a number of alternatives that can be helpful to working parents of sick children. Some employers have structured sick leave or personal leave to include the times when a worker's child gets ill. The 3M Company in Minneapolis, Minnesota, for example, has contracted with Home Health Plus, a division of Child Care Services, Inc., which provides trained child care workers to care for sick children in the homes of their employees. The costs are shared by the company and the employee.

In Tucson, Arizona, the Sick Child Home Health Care Program sends a trained health care aide to the home of working parents with sick children. The nonprofit service provides on-call, in-home health care for sick children from birth through high school. The costs to parents are shared by United Way and the city of Tucson.

The Berkeley Sick Child Care Program in Berkeley, California, combines in-home and center care. A trained home health worker from the center is sent to the home prior to the time a parent leaves for work. The same worker can return to stay with the child for the duration of the illness. Other child care options for sick children include a sick bay or get well room at the child's regular center or a family day care satellite home connected to a child care center. Minneapolis has initiated a free-standing infirmary model called Chicken Soup, funded by government grants and corporate donations. The program is run by Alternative Services for Children, and serves children age six weeks to twelve years old. It has a separate room for children with chicken pox.

Employer-Based Programs

Employer interest concerning the child care needs of working parents has increased over the last few years, particularly in industries or companies with a largely female workforce. Most of the employer attention, however, has focused on preschool children. There are only a few examples of employer-based initiatives concerning the needs of school-age children.

In Skokie, Illinois, the Fel-Pro Company has a summer camp for children from age six to fifteen. The costs of the program are shared between the company and the employees who use the service. It provides a helpful alternative to the working parent who

must make child care arrangements for school-age children during the summer.

Camper at the summer day camp sponsored by the Fel-Pro Company

In Minneapolis, Minnesota, The Norwest Bank entered into a partnership with the Minneapolis public schools and opened a before- and after-school program in an area of town where branch banks are located.

In Hartford, Connecticut, the Phoenix Mutual Life Insurance Company wanted to do more to help working parents of school-age children in addition to the company's flex-time policy. The company instituted a special project using the *I'm in Charge* curriculum for children in self-care. The curriculum is taught to the parents and children at the work-site in an effort to enhance self-care arrangements when they are necessary.

In New Jersey, the Hoffman-LaRoche Company added a school-age drop-in center to the LaRoche Child Care Center for school-age children of its employees.

A good example of a joint private and public sector initiative is a program sponsored by Family Services of Norfolk, Virginia. Family Services developed a special manual called *Key Facts for Latchkey Families*, and a three-session training program that is taught to parents of children in self-care and to their supervisors or managers at the work-site. The first session, for managers, is called "Managing Employee Stress: Supervising Parents of Latchkey Children." The second and third sessions, for the parent-workers, are called respectively "Stress Management for Employees" and "Parenting the Latchkey Child." The goal of the workplace curriculum is to identify and develop a plan of action and support for families with children in self-care.

The development of these employer-based initiatives is a positive sign. The next chapter concerns itself with how you can aid in the development of these and all the other alternatives in your own community.

Gearing for Action: What Can Be Done?

Children are an investment in our future.

Concern about the increasing numbers of school-age children without supervision and care when school is not in session has stimulated action in many sectors of the community at large. In response to parents' requests for help, and to address the implications of research on the impact of self-care on young children, citizens at all levels of the private and public sector are coming up with creative solutions.

Federal legislators recognize the problem but in a time of scarce resources and competing needs are slow to pass laws or allocate funds. In 1984 the House Select Committee on Children, Youth, and Families highlighted the need with a report called *Families and Child Care: Improving the Options*. Provisions of another federal bill, the School Facilities Child Care Act, were subsequently reflected in a $12 million block grant amendment to the Human Services Reauthorization Act of 1984. All these federal initiatives are indications of the growing national interest in young school-age children and their families' search for support.

Several states have successfully initiated legislative and budgetary action. On January 6, 1983, then newly elected

Governor Mario Cuomo, in his State of the State message to the New York Legislature, remarked on the critical need for programs that provide care and supervision for school-age children during nonschool hours. He requested the New York Council on Children and Families to recommend "...effective use of state, local, and voluntary resources to achieve greater school-community partnerships for after-school programs."[1] Subsequent legislation made $300,000 available to communities selected to participate in a special development project—granting up to $10,000 for each new project to help get it under way.

California was less successful. In 1984, that state's "latchkey package"—a group of bills designed to start and to support school-age child care programs and related activities—passed both the California House and Senate, only to go down to defeat by a gubernatorial veto. Widespread support for the concept insures that it will be brought to vote again.

In Maine a special committee on school-age child care, part of the Maine Child Care Task Force, was organized in 1984 to respond to a mandate from the governor. As part of the committee's work, a telephone poll was conducted to determine the number of children in self-care in Maine. Finding that at least 25,000 children, ages six through twelve, spend some or all of their after-school time caring for themselves, the committee made a number of recommendations on policy and funding that would address the need for services for this age group.

In Wisconsin, interest from the governor and the State Department of Health and Social Services helped to identify the care and supervision of children in self-care as a high priority. In 1984, $78,000 was appropriated to fund three new or innovative projects: a school-based program, a community-based check-in program for older children, and an education project in self-care skills for children in grades four through eight.

A number of other states are now considering future activities on behalf of school-age children and their care, and it is likely that special programs will emerge at the state level over the next few years.

Awareness about the need for services for these children has had its strongest support at the city and county levels. In many cases it is community activity that stimulates interest at higher levels of government. Community interest and activity can take place in many forms. Mayors in several cities are paying attention to school-age children's out-of-school time. A survey sponsored by the Mayor's Office of Community Services in Madison, Wisconsin, included interviews of children in an effort to gather data assessing the gap between needs and services for school-

age children. Besides those already mentioned, other county and city efforts include Mecklenburg County in North Carolina and Lincoln, Nebraska. The Council for Children, a United Way agency, gathered data in Mecklenburg County through a questionnaire distributed to students in eighty-five classrooms throughout the school system. These responses, together with other data gathered from additional questionnaires distributed to service providers, helped the council design an approach to increasing and improving school-age child care services in the area. In Lincoln, Nebraska, a Task Force on Latchkey Children was set up by the City Council to survey needs and resources, and to recommend to the council alternatives to expand school-age child care options in that city.

As already mentioned, in a number of communities employer-supported projects that focus on school-age child care are taking hold. Besides the programs mentioned, some companies are supporting information and referral services that help parents find school-age child care. Other options for corporate support include employee voucher programs, donation of materials and equipment to community programs, making funds available for transportation systems that allow children to be brought from school to after-school programs, and collaboration with community task forces that are exploring the development of increased and improved child care services. This collaborative approach has characterized many community efforts, and has, in many cases, met with considerable success.

Formal, supervised child care programs are not the only outcomes of these efforts; some communities organize workshops and conferences on self-help skills for children, providing a forum for sharing of ideas and discussion of the issues. Television stations contribute their resources by filming documentaries and offering public service air time for announcements and public education campaigns. Policy review teams review regulatory and funding policies with an eye toward revision and reform of policy impediments to services for school-age children. Innovations like telephone hot lines and block parent homes are the direct result of the work of community groups or professional associations that came together to initiate or to provide a service that the community lacks.

At all levels – federal, state, and local – several tasks are common to all types of activity on behalf of school-age children. It is first essential to gather data on the scope of the need and demand for services. An earlier chapter indicated the difficulty of ascertaining accurate numbers nationally, but certain indicators do exist and have been used to buttress legislative proposals. As

the Bureau of the Census releases additional data, this will help to focus attention further on this issue. States and local communities can gather data on the child-caring practices of families, correlated with participation in the labor force and other indicators; this data gathering process is critical if states and communities are adequately to design and administer special programs and services for school-age children. Local data gathering is, in many ways, the easier task since the schools, both private and public, can access information about the children and families they serve through school surveys.

Community or state task forces should also know the picture of the existing supply of services not only to avoid duplication, but also to learn how existing services can be adapted or expanded. Funding sources must be examined in order to develop a funding base for low-income and moderate-income families unable to pay the whole cost of services. Other critical tasks include assessing the community's training capacity: working with school-age children in programs, over the telephone, or in safety skills classes does require specialized training that may not be available.

To guarantee that the work of task forces reaches the population it is intended to reach, public education of parents, children, and the community is another essential ingredient. Newspaper articles, television and radio programs, and publicity through the schools and other community organizations should be mobilized so that it is clear what is available and how to reach those resources. A series of thirty-second public service announcements for television combining public awareness about alternatives to self-care with information about available community resources has been developed by the School-Age Child Care Project in cooperation with a Connecticut television station.

Organizing around the needs of young school-age children and their families for some type of assistance is a task that inspires many different sectors in a community. A task force that convened as a follow-up to a parent survey in Kansas City, Missouri, resulted in a foundation-sponsored development project that has stimulated the start-up of new programs, staff training, and a public awareness campaign. A governor's task force in Arizona is organized to mount a statewide response to the growing concern in that state about the number of school-age children with few options for after-school services. These are only two examples of the kinds of responses that communities and states can make. Although many other examples exist, much work remains to be done. Resources are limited and are often

shared with other human service needs that also demand attention. Action groups must counter the conventional wisdom that once a child is in school, he or she no longer requires the kind of care that younger children require, or that watching out for children is the responsibility of only the family alone, and not the community. These myths can, and do, surface, but it is clear that resistant attitudes such as these do not have to prevent work from being accomplished to devise appropriate and creative solutions for the supervision and care of school-age children.

At a time in the history of the United States when a sense of "neighborhood" is hard to come by, gathering together to work on solutions for the care of children can be an act of community for those involved. School-age child care programs, telephone reassurance lines, and other innovations for school-age children are all ways in which we can create a sense of community for children.

Appendix A: First National Conference on Latchkey Children: Presenters (with affiliations at the time of the conference)

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Appendix B: Selected Resources

This appendix lists some of the resources that are available to individuals and groups interested in developing school-age child care programs. This is not a comprehensive listing, and it is not meant to include every program that is available nationwide.

If you are aware of school-age child care resources that are not listed here, but which should be considered for future printings of this publication, please complete the tear-off sheet at the back of the booklet and return it to the National Committee for Prevention of Child Abuse.

Child Care for Sick Children

Berkeley Sick Child Care Program
1108-F San Pablo
Albany, CA 94706
(415) 526-7425

Chicken Soup
322 South 3rd Street
Minneapolis, MN 55415
(612) 546-7480

Child Care Services
A Division of Home Health Plus
825 South 8th Street, Suite M
Minneapolis, MN 55404
(612) 347-5447

Sick Child Home Health Program
Tucson Association for Child Care, Inc.
2555 East 1st Street
Tucson, AZ 85705
(602) 881-8940

Community Development Programs

AgeLink
Center for Improving Mountain Living
Western Carolina University
Cullowhee, NC 28723
(717) 738-5600

Council for Children
301 South Brevard Street
Mecklenburg County
Charlotte, NC 28202
(704) 372-7961

Family and Children Services
The Living Center
Kansas City School Age Child Care Project
3217 Broadway, Suite 500
Kansas City, MO 64111
(816) 753-5280

The Institute for School-Age Child Care
1301 Park Avenue
Baltimore, MD 21217
(301) 669-9000

Kids Place
Office of the Mayor
1200 Municipal
Seattle, WA 98104
(206) 625-4000

San Antonio Coalition for Children, Youth, and Families
1101 West Woodlawn Avenue, Room 205
San Antonio, TX 78201
(512) 732-1051

Educational Materials

Alone After School: A Self-Care Guide for Latchkey Children and Their Parents by Helen Swan and Victoria Houston
Prentice-Hall, Englewood Cliffs, NJ (1985)

Basic Aid Training (BAT)
American Red Cross, Minneapolis Area Chapter, Youth Services
11 Dell Place at Groveland Avenue
Minneapolis, MN 55403
(612) 871-7676

Homemaking Elementary Learning Procedure Project (HELP)
Cranston Public Schools
845 Park Avenue
Cranston, RI 02190
(401) 785-0400

How to Raise a Street Smart Child: The Complete Parents' Guide to Safety on the Street and at Home by Grace Hechinger
Facts on File Publications, New York (1984)

I Can Do It
Camp Fire, Inc.
4601 Madison Avenue
Kansas City, MO 64112
(816) 756-1950

I'm Home: A Guide for Children with Independent Time/Be Home Soon: A Guide for Parents of Children with Independent Time by Nancy McConnell
Current, Inc., Colorado Springs, CO (1984)

I'm in Charge
Kansas Committee for Prevention of Child Abuse
35 South Kansas Avenue, 2nd Floor
Topeka, KS 66603
(913) 354-7738

In Charge: A Complete Handbook for Kids with Working Parents by Kathy S. Kyte
Knops, New York (1983)

On My Own: The Kids' Self-Care Book by Lynette Long
Acropolis Books, Ltd., Washington, D.C. (1984)

On My Own
Michigan Pine and Dune Girl Scout Council
1533 Peck Street
Muskegon, MI 49441
(616) 726-3241

P.A.L.S. - Bridgeview School
7800 South Thomas Avenue
Bridgeview, IL 60455
(312) 496-8713

Prepared for Today
Boy Scouts of America
1325 Walnut Hill Lane
Irving, TX 75038-3096
(214) 659-2117

School's Out—Now What? Choices for Your Child's Time by
Joan M. Bergstrom
Ten Speed Press, P.O. Box 7123, Berkeley, CA (1984)

Survival Guide for Busy Parents: How to Help Your Child Do Well at School While You Do Well at Work by Dorothy Rich
Home and School Institute, Washington, D.C. (1983)

Survival Skills for Kids
Virginia Cooperative Extension Service
Distribution Center, Landsdowne Street
Blacksburg, VA 24061
(703) 961-6192

The Handbook for Latchkey Children and Their Parents: A Complete Guide for Latchkey Kids and Their Working Parents by Lynette and Thomas Long
Arbor House Publishing Company, New York (1983)

The Official Kids' Survival Kit: How to Do Things on Your Own by
Elaine Chaback and Pat Fortunato
Little, Brown & Company, Boston, MA (1981)

Employer-Based Programs

Family Services of Norfolk, VA
222 S. 19th St.
Norfolk, VA 23517
(804) 622-7017

Fel-Pro Corporation
"Triple R Camp"
7450 N. McCormick
Skokie, IL 60076
(312) 674-7700

Hoffman-La Roche, Inc.
Roche Child Care Center
340 Kingsland St.
Nutley, NJ 07110
(201) 235-5000

The Houston Sector for Private Sector Initiatives
P.O. Box 2511
Houston, TX 77001
(713) 757-2131

New Ways to Work
149 9th St.
San Francisco CA 94103
(415) 552-1000

Norwest Bank Minneapolis, N.A.
8th and Marquette
Minneapolis, MN 55479
(612) 372-8123

Phoenix Mutual Life
Insurance Company
One American Row
Hartford, CT 06115
(203) 275-5000

Family Day Care Check-In and Block Club Programs

Detroit Coalition for Unified
Block Parent Program
Michigan State PTA
1011 N. Washington
Lansing, MI 48906
(313) 588-8787

Emergency Block Parent Program
The Big Red "E" Program
Fowler PTA
6509 W. Roosevelt
Phoenix, AZ 85043
(602) 257-3281

Family Day Care Check-In
Program
Fairfax County Office for
Children
3976 Chain Bridge Rd.
Fairfax, VA 22030
(703) 691-3175

Shawnee Mission Area Council
of PTA: Block Mother Program
7235 Antioch
Shawnee Mission, KS 66204
(913) 831-1900

Government Organizations

Child Development Programs
Advisory Committee
915 Capitol Mall, Room 250
Sacramento, CA 95814
(916) 322-8181

Fairfax County Office for
Children
11212 Waples Mill Road
Fairfax, VA 22030
(703) 691-3175

Mayor's Office of Community
Services
City-County Building
210 Monroe Avenue, Room 513
Madison, WI 53710
(608) 266-4611

New York State Council on
Children and Families
School-age Child Care Program
Tower Bldg. 28th Fl., Empire
State Plaza
Albany, NY 12223
(518) 474-6293

Select Committee on Children,
Youth and Families
U.S. House of Representatives
385 House Annex 2
Washington, D.C. 20515
(202) 226-7660

Task Force on Latchkey Children
City Council
County Office Building
555 S. 10th St.
Lincoln, NE 68508
(402) 471-7515

Help Lines

Campfire's Call A Friend
19-A Prince St.
Rochester, NY 14607
(716) 271-0570

Chatters
Neighborhood Centers, Inc.
5005 Fanin
Houston, TX 77004
(713) 529-3931
(713) 661-7052

CONTACT-Syracuse, Inc.
958 Salt Springs Rd.
Syracuse, NY 13224
(315) 446-2610

Kids Line
P.O. Box 1321
Elk Grove Village, IL 60007
(312) 981-1271

PhoneFriend
P.O. Box 555
Kansas City, MO 64109
(913) 677-5555

PhoneFriend, Inc.
Beecher House
Penn State University
University Park, PA 16801
(814) 865-1751

Information and Technical Assistance

American Association of School Administrators
1801 N. Moore St.
Arlington, VA 22209
(703) 528-0700

Child Care Information Services
National Association for the Education of Young Children
1834 Connecticut Ave., N.W.
Washington, DC 20009
(202) 232-8777

Child Care Law Center
625 Market St., 815
San Francisco, CA 94105
(415) 495-5498

College Connection
1900 Powell
Emeryville, CA 94608
(415) 652-7171, x485

Early Adolescent Helper-Project
Center for Advanced Study in Education
CASE, CUNY Graduate Center
33 W. 42nd St.
New York, NY 10036
(212) 719-9066

Home and School Institute, Inc.
Special Projects Office
1201 16th St., N.W.
Washington, DC 20036
(202) 466-3633

National Conference of State Legislators
1125 17th St. Suite 1500
Denver, CO 80202
(303) 292-6600

National Institute for Latchkey Children and Youth
900 Seventeenth St., N.W.
Suite 400
Washington, DC 20006
(319) 229-6126

Professional Services through Technology
The Department of Instructional Technology and Design
Rio Salado Community College
135 N. 2nd Ave.
Phoenix, AZ 85003
(602) 256-7722, x203

School Age Notes
P.O. Box 120674
Nashville, TN 37212
(615) 292-4957

National Organizations

American Association of School Administrators
1801 N. Moore St.
Arlington, VA 22209
(703) 528-0700

Association of Junior Leagues, Inc.
825 Third Ave.
New York, NY 10022
(212) 355-4380

Boys Clubs of America
771 First Ave.
New York, NY 10017
(212) 557-7758

Boy Scouts of America
1325 Walnut Hill Ln.
Irving, TX 75038-3096
(214) 659-2117

Camp Fire, Inc.
4601 Madison Ave.
Kansas City, MO 64112
(816) 756-1950

Center for Early Adolescence
University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill
Suite 223 Carr Mill Mall
Carrboro, NC 27510
(919) 966-1148

Child Care Action Campaign
99 Hudson St.
New York, NY 10013
(212) 334-9595

Child Care Information Services
National Association for the Education of Young Children
1834 Connecticut Ave., N.W.
Washington, DC 20009
(202) 232-8777

Girls Clubs of America, Inc.
205 Lexington Ave.
New York, NY 10016
(212) 689-3700

National Committee for *Prevention of Child Abuse*
332 S. Michigan Ave., Suite 950
Chicago, IL 60604
(312) 663-3520

National Crime Prevention Council
733 15th St., N.W., 5th Fl.
Washington, DC 20005
(202) 393-7141

School-Age Child Care Project
Wellesley College Center for Research on Women
Wellesley, MA 02181
(617) 431-1463, x2546

YMCA of the U.S.A.
101 N. Wacker Dr.
Chicago, IL 60606
(312) 977-0031

Research Organizations

Family Research Center
Department of Child Development and Family Relations
University of North Carolina at Greensboro
Greensboro, NC 27412
(919) 379-5307

National Committee for Prevention of Child Abuse
332 S. Michigan Ave., Suite 950
Chicago, IL 60604
(312) 663-3520

Southwest Educational
Development Laboratory
211 E. 7th St.
Austin, TX 78701
(512) 476-6861

Work and Family Life Study
610 W. 112th St.
New York, NY 11379
(212) 663-7200, x394

School-Age Child Care Programs

Adventure Club
4139 Regent Avenue North
Robbinsdale, MN 55422
(612) 535-1790, x 240

Arlington Education Center
1426 N. Quincy St.
Arlington, VA 22207
(703) 558-2884

Brookline After-School Special
Program
Sewall School
279 Cypress St.
Brookline, MA 02146
(617) 734-6444

Dade County Public Schools
1410 N.E. 2nd Ave., Room 1429
Miami, FL 33132
(305) 350-3009

Fairfax County Office for
Children
3976 Chain Bridge Rd.
Fairfax, VA 22030
(703) 691-3175

Reston Children's Center
11825 Olde Crafts Drive
Reston, VA 22091
(703) 476-8150

Carole Robertson Center for
Learning
2020 W. Roosevelt Rd.
Chicago, IL 60608
(312) 243-7300

References

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3. Joan Lipsitz, "Setting Policy for Young Adolescents in the After-School Hours" (Proceedings from a conference sponsored by the Center for Early Adolescence and the Johnson Foundation, Racine, WI, November 1984).
4. Joan Bergstrom, *School's Out—Now What? Creative Choices for Your Child* (Berkeley: Ten Speed Press, 1984), 15.
5. Children's Defense Fund, *Employed Parents and Their Children: A Data Book* (Washington, D.C., 1982).
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Other NCPCA Publications

The National Committee for Prevention of Child Abuse (NCPCA) distributes and publishes educational materials that deal with a variety of topics, including parenting, child abuse, and child abuse prevention. The NCPCA catalog is available free upon request from NCPCA, Publishing Dept., 332 S. Michigan Ave., Suite 950, Chicago, IL 60604-4357, (312) 663-3520.

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